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SUBJECT: WIDESPREAD SAF BOMBING REPORTED IN DARFUR

REFS: A) KHARTOUM 83  
B) KHARTOUM 84  
C) KHARTOUM 85

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Contacts from UNAMID, Darfur rebel movements, and civil society reported widespread Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) bombing in both North and South Darfur on January 24-25. Sources reported that the bombing was not restricted to JEM positions in Muhajarriya, South Darfur, but included bombing on SLA-Unity, SLA/Abdul Wahid, and possibly even SLA/Minni Minnawi throughout the region. Despite their limited fire power, the SAF appears to have used MIG fighters in addition to Antonovs in at least one of the bombing campaigns. One lead from an internally displaced camp reported an influx of new IDPs into North Darfur camps as a result of the recent violence. END SUMMARY.

#### BOMBING IN MUHAJARRIYA

2. (SBU) On January 25, UNAMID reported that the GOS began a "bombing campaign" on January 22. According to this reporting, GOS aircrafts bombed a village ten kilometers east of Muhajarriya, resulting in the injury of at least three people, and the destruction of 60 homes. UNAMID also reported that the Government's notorious Popular Defense Force (PDF) had moved into formerly SLM-MM-held Gereida the week of January 18. 41 SLM/MM subsequently sought refuge with UNAMID in Gereida upon arrival of the PDF, while JEM rebels remained stationed outside of Gereida. This report also states that on January 24 UNAMID learned that four MIG fighters flew over Muhajarriya, received fire from JEM, and subsequently bombed JEM positions. Two of these bombs hit the North IDP camp west of the UNAMID base, resulting in the death of one IDP child, and the destruction of at least eight houses.

3. (SBU) UNDSS representatives based in Nyala told poloff on January 25 that since January 21, the GOS has intermittently bombed areas in South Darfur, including one populated area in South Darfur. (Contrary to the reporting above) this UN source stated that he had no indication as to the number of casualties from the bombardment. This contact stated that UNDSS had previously planned an assessment mission for January 26, but determined in a meeting that the area remains a "no-go zone" for international humanitarian workers, and UNAMID has yet to conduct a reconnaissance mission to the area.

4. (SBU) Another UNDSS source stated that last week's lull in fighting between SLM/MM and JEM was the result of negotiations between Minnawi and JEM. According to this source, the GOS attempted to disrupt this reconciliation effort by bombing Muhajarriya "as the Government of Sudan is not comfortable with SLM/MM and JEM becoming friends," preferring that current and former rebel groups fight each other. This same contact also stated that he had received one report that the Sudanese Armed Forces had entered some areas occupied by SLM/MM forces and begun disarming Minnawi's forces. This contact speculated, "If this is true, this disarmament of Minnawi's forces supports the theory of a growing GOS concern that Minnawi may join with the Krebel opposition again and perhaps even drop the DPA altogether."

5. (SBU) SLM/MM Member of Parliament, Ali Traio, told poloff on January 25 that he had "no information" regarding violence in Darfur. When hearing reports of alleged SAF disarmament of SLM/MM fighters or inadvertent GOS attacks on SLM/MM positions as reported in Sudan Tribune, Traio lashed out, "You people in the United States want to know about every little detail of a chaotic situation that you created." Traio is one of many in the SLM/MM movement who believe that JEM was emboldened by its visit to Washington, resulting in JEM feeling confident enough to attack SLM/MM positions. CDA Fernandez urged Minnawi on January 22 and 25 by satellite phone from Darfur, "not to be manipulated by the GOS" in his eagerness to get back at JEM. He noted that "nothing makes Khartoum happier than to see Zaghawa fighting Zaghawa." Minnawi noted that he has nothing against (JEM leader) Khalil Ibrahim, "but we want to see a return to the status quo ante January 15."

#### BOMBING REPORTED ELSEWHERE IN NORTH & SOUTH DARFUR

6. (SBU) On January 24, SLM/Unity Leader Abdallah Yehia told poloff via satellite phone that Government Antonov airplanes bombed SLM/Unity's positions east of Muhajarriya in Abu Sauna and Abu Rufyan (11053' 26024'). Yehia stated that he had seen the destruction of Abu Sauna "with his own eyes" and asked for U.S. intervention "to stop the GOS from its indiscriminate air campaign." On January 25, a UNDSS source confirmed that this area had been bombed, but said that SLA/AW, and not SLA/Unity was the target of this attack. (Note: We have heard reports of increased coordination between SLA/AW and SLA/Unity. On January 25, Center for Humanitarian Dialogue's Theo Murphy told CDA Fernandez that some

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senior SLA/Unity commanders have been working closely with SLA/AW and several may be ready to defect to Abdul Wahid's movement. Septel will follow. End Note.) Contrary to these reports of bombing outside of Muhajarriya, another UNDSS source based in Nyala said that he had not received confirmation of bombings near Haskanita, and cautioned that accurate information was exceedingly difficult to obtain in Darfur.

¶7. (SBU) Also on January 25, prominent SLA/AW Commander Muhammad Gadura told emboff that in addition to Muhajarriya, the Sudanese Armed Forces bombed areas of North Darfur including Ain Siero, Bir Mazza, and Al Hashaba on January 24. Ahmed Atim Uthman, a community leader in Al Salam IDP camp in El-Fasher, also reported that the violence of the last two weeks has resulted in an influx of new IDPs to the camps over the last few days. Uthman reported that two hundred families traveling from both North and South Darfur arrived in Al-Salaam IDP camp on January 24.

#### PRESS REPORTS

¶8. (SBU) Local and international press reported that the Sudanese Armed Forces readily admitted to attacking JEM positions in South Darfur. On January 25, the pro-government "Akhir Lahza" also reported that Minnawi had not reconciled with JEM and that "it is only a matter of time before SLM/MM recaptures Muhajarriya." The article further states that SLM/MM "absolutely rejects" any form of mediation with JEM. "Al-Rai Al-Aam" reprinted portions of a Reuters article which quotes a SAF Spokesman acknowledging the SAF attack on Muhajarriya. The article also emphasizes that SLM/MM and JEM have not reconciled, and quotes JEM Political Secretary Ahmed Tugud as boasting of JEM's military capability in the face of the GOS attack. As if boasting its military capacity and media profile, JEM's website also translated the Reuters and AFP stories into Arabic, highlighting the GOS bombing, its civilian death toll, and the proximity of the bombing to UNAMID bases.

#### COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) It appears as though the GOS has used the pretext of targeting JEM for waging a broader campaign not just on JEM but also on other rebel movements. While the international press has fixated on Muhajarriya, there are other areas that may be as affected as this area in South Darfur. With Minnawi's return to Darfur, it appears as though SLM/MM representatives in Khartoum are not well informed about exactly what is happening to their movement. This is also the second time in a week that we have received incongruent information from sources within UNAMID, highlighting, once again, the need for better information gathering and sharing within the hybrid force. Post will continue to follow the trail of violence in Darfur, particularly in Muhajarriya, Abu Sauna, Abu Sufyan, and Hashaba, as JEM attempts to increase its profile and strength in Darfur and the SAF responds with a coordinated bombing campaign. This latest episode of violence highlights once again the complex nature of the conflict in Darfur, with rebels fighting each other and then reconciling, and the government playing the rebels off each other to its own advantage. The bombing campaign will likely continue, as the government intends to blunt JEM's recent offensive and cannot afford to allow JEM to build significant strength deep in South Darfur so close to the border with Kordofan - within striking distance of oil installations and urban areas in the Nile valley.

FERNANDEZ